

Role of the Mentor¹

Each newly appointed Associate Professor will be supported by a mentor who is an independent, permanent member of academic staff. To avoid any conflict of interest, the mentor should not be the head of department/faculty board chair and should not be involved in allocating work to the Associate Professor. The choice of mentor should be agreed with the Associate Professor, and provision made for the Associate Professor to change mentor.

Role

The role of the mentor is to:

- (a) assist with induction into the department/faculty and the University;
- (b) provide guidance and support in relation to teaching and research;
- (c) provide guidance and support in relation to the formal procedures for reappointment to the retiring age.

The role of the mentor will encompass some or all of 'trusted friend', 'counsellor', 'information provider', and 'door opener'. The mentor has no role in the formal processes to review the Associate Professor's initial period of office, and should not be consulted by those carrying out the reviews or be expected to convey feedback to or from them.

Meetings

The mentor and mentee should agree at an early stage on the frequency of meetings (e.g. once a term, twice a year) in addition to informal discussions as and when required. It would be good practice for both mentor and mentee to keep a brief record of the points discussed at meetings. There may, on occasion, be discussions which are confidential and/or 'off the record'.

Topics for discussion

The following is a possible list of topics that the mentor/mentee may wish to discuss. It is not meant to be prescriptive, but rather to give examples of topics.

- (a) Research: research, funding, and publication plans; sources of funding and grant applications.
- (b) Teaching: preparation/delivery of lectures, seminars, teaching methods, graduate supervision (e.g. sharing of knowledge, experience and resources, not allocating work).
- (c) Assessment: assessment methods, design of examination papers, marking standards, question setting.

¹ Adapted with permission from guidance prepared by the Blavatnik School of Government.

(d) Administration: department/faculty and University procedures etc.

(e) Career and staff development: balance of duties and workload (including guidance on which requests from the department/faculty or college to accept and which to refuse), professional development.

Research topics

In view of the importance of research for academic staff, the research topics that a Associate Professor may wish to discuss with their mentor are set out in more detail as follows:

(a) their personal research plans with details of particular research projects, papers to be written, the Research Excellence Framework, etc;

(b) the academic journals to which completed papers might be submitted for Publication;

(c) opportunities to apply for external funding (perhaps initially jointly with a colleague or colleagues);

(d) (where relevant) how to establish, grow and manage a research group;

(e) (where relevant) opportunities for engaging and influencing policymakers, practitioners, the mass media and the public with their research;

(f) conferences to attend and possible sources of funding;

(g) the making of useful research contacts eg:

(i) visits to other institutions to meet with researchers working in same field;

(ii) identifying distinguished visitors to invite to Oxford to give seminars / seminar series and talk with the member of staff;

(iii) introductions if attending the same conference.